

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently Amended) A filter cartridge comprising:  
a generally cylindrical filter body having a fluid-filtration ~~media~~ medium and ~~an interior space, and~~  
at least one length-adjustable end cap ~~attached to an end of said filter body~~, wherein said length-adjustable end cap includes ~~an annular~~ a stationary ring member ~~and, a movable connection member slideably received within said annular stationary ring member so as to be moveable longitudinally relative thereto~~ within the interior space of the filter body, and ~~wherein one of said stationary ring member and said moveable connection member includes a pair of cross supports~~ a seal ring fixed to the stationary member in the interior space of the filter body in sealing contact with the moveable connection member.

2. (Previously Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein said moveable connection member includes a cylindrical neck portion slideably received within said stationary ~~ring~~ member, and a flange portion at one end of said neck portion.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~The A~~ A filter cartridge of claim ~~2 or 3~~ 1, wherein said length adjustable end cap includes ~~an annular base member attached to an end of the cylindrical filter body, and wherein said stationary ring member is generally cylindrical and protrudes upwardly from said annular base member comprising:~~  
a generally cylindrical filter body having a fluid-filtration media and  
a length-adjustable end cap including a stationary annular base member attached to an end of the cylindrical filter body, a stationary ring member which is generally cylindrical and protrudes upwardly from the stationary annular base member, a series of radially extending buttresses joined to the stationary ring member and the stationary annular base member, and a generally cylindrical, moveable connection member slideably received within the stationary ring member so as to be moveable longitudinally relative thereto.

5. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim 4, wherein said stationary ring member is positioned along a radial dimension of said stationary annular base member so as to provide for an essentially balanced pressure condition on interior and exterior regions thereof.

6. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 4, wherein said stationary ring member is positioned substantially midway along a radial dimension of the annular base member.

7. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 4, wherein said annular base member includes a cross support rod.

8. (Currently Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 1, further comprising a bottom end cap attached to another end of said filter body opposite said length-adjustable end cap.

10. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 9, wherein said bottom end cap includes an arcuate central wall which protrudes into an interior space of said cylindrical filter body.

11. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 10, wherein said bottom end cap includes a series of integral radial support ribs.

12. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim 1, wherein said ~~filter body~~ fluid-filtration medium includes a non-woven mass of melt-blown polymeric fibers.

13. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim 1, wherein said ~~filter body~~ fluid-filtration medium includes a pleated fluid filter medium.

14. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~3~~ 4, wherein said ~~stationary ring member~~ length-adjustable end cap further includes a seal ring in ~~slideable~~ sealing contact with said ~~neck portion of~~ between said moveable connection member and said stationary ring member.

15. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~4~~ 1, wherein said ~~neck portion~~ length-adjustable end cap further includes a stop member which ~~contacts said seal ring and thereby limit~~ limits movement of said moveable connection member away from said stationary member.

16. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~1~~ 4, wherein said ~~length-adjustable end cap includes a stationary ring member, and a seal ring comprises an O-ring seal and the~~ moveable connection member ~~which carries an the~~ O-ring seal, ~~and wherein said moveable connection member is slideably received within said stationary ring member such that said O-ring seal is in sliding sealing contact therewith.~~

17. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~4~~ 4, wherein said length-adjustable end cap ~~includes an annular base member attached to an end of said filter body, and wherein stationary ring member is generally cylindrical and is integrally joined to, and extends upwardly from, said annular base member.~~ further includes a stop which limits movement of the moveable connection member away from said stationary ring member.

18. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~4~~ 1, wherein said ~~moveable connection member includes a cylindrical neck portion slideably received within said stationary ring member in sealing contact with said seal ring, and a flange portion transversely positioned at an uppermost end of said neck portion~~ seal ring is fixed to an inner annular region of the stationary member so as to be coaxially positioned with respect to the interior space of the filter body.

19. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim 18, wherein said ~~neck portion inner annular region~~ includes a recess, and ~~an O-ring seal the seal ring is~~ seated within said recess so as to be in a sealing contact with ~~an interior cylindrical surface of said stationary ring member~~ said moveable connection member.

20. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~4~~ 4, wherein said fluid-filtration ~~media~~ medium includes a non-woven mass of melt-blown polymeric fibers.

21. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of claim ~~4~~ 4, wherein the fluid-filtration ~~media~~ medium includes at least one non-woven or woven pleated sheet of fluid-filtration material.

22. (Currently Amended) A filter cartridge comprising:  
a filter body which defines a generally cylindrical interior space;

a length-adjustable top end cap which is attached to an upper end of said filter body and defines an opening to allow fluid-communication with said interior space of said filter body;

a bottom end cap attached to a lower end of said filter body so as to ~~enclose~~ close said interior space thereat; wherein said length-adjustable top end cap includes:

- (i) an annular base member attached to said filter body;
- (ii) a generally cylindrical stationary ring member integrally joined at one end to, and extending upwardly from, said annular base member;
- (iii) a moveable member having a generally transverse annular support flange,
- ~~(iv)~~ —a cylindrical neck member integrally depending from said support flange, and
- ~~(v)~~ —a series of radially extending buttresses joined to said stationary ring member and said annular base member, wherein
- ~~(vi)~~ (iv) said neck member is slideably received within said stationary ring member so as to move the support flange towards and away from said filter body and thereby establish respective lesser and greater axial dimensions of said filter cartridge.

23. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 22, wherein said stationary ring member is positioned substantially midway along a radial dimension of the annular base member.

24. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 22, wherein said annular base member includes a cross support rod.

25. (Previously Cancelled)

26. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 22, wherein said bottom end cap includes an arcuate central wall which protrudes into said interior space of said filter body.

27. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 26, wherein said bottom end cap includes a series of integral radial support ribs.

28. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 22, wherein said filter body includes a non-woven mass of melt-blown polymeric fibers.

29. (Previously Presented) The filter cartridge of claim 22, wherein said filter body includes a pleated fluid filter medium.

30. (Currently Amended) The filter housing comprising a rigid basket member having a generally cylindrical side wall, and a filter cartridge as in claim 1, or 4 or 22 positioned in said basket member, wherein said length-adjustable end cap allows said filter cartridge to assume a length dimension substantially the same as said side wall of said basket member.

31. (Previously Cancelled)